Defending and Speaking the Truth in a Time of Falsehood: The Patristic Teaching

St. Basil the Great: "Anyone who is capable of speaking the truth but remains silent, will be heavily judged by God, especially in this case, where the faith and the very foundation of the entire church of the Orthodox is in danger. To remain silent under these circumstances is to betray these, and the appropriate witness belongs to those that reproach (stand up for the faith)."[1]

St. Paisios of Mount Athos: "You see people abusing and reviling holy and sacred things and others not saying anything. Being meek on such an occasion is demonic."[2]

St. Nikodemos of Mount Athos: "If the discussion and the question proposed is about the Faith and the Traditions of our Church, then even the most meek and quiet and peace-loving person must fight and defend these matters."[3]

St. Meletios the Confessor: "He who keeps silent about the truth keeps Christ in the tomb... to keep silent about the right Faith is truly a great danger, which leads to eternal punishment and the pit of perdition. It is not right, it is not lawful, it is not fitting for those of right belief to be silent at all when those eager to promote deception and error violate the laws of God. Where God is at stake, says one of the great Fathers [St. Gregory the Theologian], and the forces of harm and destruction are aimed directly against Him, what faithful Christian can keep silent? Who can be at peace at all? For silence betokens acquiescence. It is better to stand up to those who do not think aright than to follow them in their errors, separating ourselves from God and uniting ourselves to them."[4]

St. Justin the Philosopher: "... everyone who can speak the truth, and yet speaks it not, shall be judged by God, as God testified by Ezekiel, when He said, 'I have made you a watchman to the house of Judah. If the sinner sin, and you warn him not, he himself shall die in his sin; but his blood will I require at your hand. But if you warn him, you shall be innocent.'"[5]

St. John Chrysostom: "If it is not safe for one to stay aloof when a man is being wronged, of what punishment will he not be worthy who keeps silent and looks the other way when the Divine Laws are being affronted?"[6]

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[1] See "Basil the Great: "To remain silent," *lifeondoverbreach.wordpress.com*, Basil The Great: "To remain silent" | Dover Beach (wordpress.com).

[2] See St. Paisios the Athonite, *Spiritual Counsels Vol. II Spiritual Awakening* (Mount Athos: Monastery of St. John the Theologian, 2008), 63.

[3] See "The World Council of Churches," *sprint.net.au*, The World Council of Churches (sprint.net.au). See also here: Saint Nicodemos Publications.

[4] See St. Meletios the Confessor, *Against the Latins, Discourse X,* "That one should not keep silent about the truth," as cited in Hieromonk Patapios and Archbishop Chrysostomos, *Manna from Athos* (Switzerland: Peter Lang AG International Academic publishers, 2006), 162-163.

[5] See St. Justin the Philosopher, "Dialogue with Trypho," chapt. 82, *newadvent.org*, CHURCH FATHERS: Dialogue with Trypho, Chapters 69-88 (Justin Martyr) (newadvent.org).

[6] See St. John Chrysostom, "Discourse on Babylas, and Against Julian and Against the Pagans," as cited in Hieromonk Patapios and Archbishop Chrysostomos, *Manna from Athos* (Switzerland: Peter Lang AG International Academic publishers, 2006), 163.

St. Gabriel Urgebadze the holy Fool for Christ: "When they are blaspheming your faith and you stay silent, you become worse than that blasphemer."[7]

St. Gregory the Theologian: "For we are not as the many, able to corrupt 2 Corinthians 2:16-17 the word of truth, and mix the wine, Isaiah 1:22 which makes glad the heart of man, with water, mix, that is, our doctrine with what is common and cheap, and debased, and stale, and tasteless, in order to turn the adulteration to our profit, and accommodate ourselves to those who meet us, and curry favor with everyone, becoming ventriloquists and chatterers, who serve their own pleasures by words uttered from the earth, and sinking into the earth, and, to gain the special good will of the multitude, injuring in the highest degree, nay, ruining ourselves, and shedding the innocent blood of simpler souls, which will be required at our hands."[8]

St. John Maximovitch: "A search for compromise will be the characteristic state of the people's faith. Directness of confession will vanish. People will subtly justify their fall… People will grow used to apostatizing from the truth and will be accustomed to the sweetness of compromise."[9]

St. Benjamin of Petrograd: "The reasoning of some, perhaps outstanding pastors is strange: 'We have to preserve our living forces,' that is, give into everyone for their sake! Then what is Christ for? It is not the not the Platonovs and the Chuprins and the Benjamins and those like them who save the Church, but Christ. That point on which they are trying to stand is destruction for the Church - it is wrong to sacrifice the Church for oneself. Now is the time of trial. People are sacrificing everything for the sake of political convictions... Cannot we Christians display a similar courage even unto death if we have some faith in Christ and the life of the age to come?"[10]

St. Paul of Starobela: "On compromising to keep the churches legally open and unpersecuted: 'Can it be that we must sell out Christ and the Kingdom of God to save Church property (church buildings, offices, utensils)? What is the difference, then, between Judas and our contemporary 'sellers of Christ'? Judas sold the Lord and Teacher for 30 pieces of silver, but his present-day followers do the same thing for the temporary maintenance of their material comfort, external order, and for property made of wood and stone (churches, buildings). But they have made a grave error. They will not succeed in preserving either their own comfort, or external order, and the office buildings and the churches are sure to be lost and perish. Just as Judas did, they sold the imperishable for the perishable, the heavenly for the earthly.'"[11]

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[7] Exact source unknown. I remember seeing this somewhere either on Instagram or Facebook and then put the quote in my sources sheet, but I cannot find the original source.

[8] See St. Gregory the Theologian, "Oration 2," *newadvent.org*, CHURCH FATHERS: Oration 2 (Gregory Nazianzen) (newadvent.org).

[9] See St. John Maximoovich of Shanghai and San Francisco as cited in Nicodemos Hagiorite, "Issues of Yesterday and Today: The issue of Compromise," *youtube.com*, Issues of yesterday and today: the dark spirit of compromise - YouTube.

[10] See St. Benjamin of Petrograd as cited in "THE HOLY NEW MARTYRS OF NORTHERN AND WESTERN RUSSIA, BELORUSSIA AND THE BALTIC," *coptics.info*, pg 27, Microsoft Word - THE HOLY NEW MARTYRS OF NORTHERN AND WESTERN RUSSI (coptics.info).

[11] See St. Paul of Starobela as cited in "St. Paul of Starobela: on the apostasy of "Soviet Orthodoxy,"" *catacombhistory.blogspots.com*, St. Paul of Starobela: on the apostasy of "Soviet Orthodoxy" (catacombhistory.blogspot.com).

St. Mark of Ephesus: "That which concerns the Church, O man, is never put right through compromises: there is no mean between Truth and falsehood."[12]

St. Hermogenes of Tobolsk the Hieromartyr: "Brother Christians! Raise your voices in defense of the Church's Apostolic Faith, the holy things of the Church, the Church's heritage. Defend your right to believe and confess your faith as you learned it in days of old, as you were taught it by the holy apostles, the holy martyrs, the God-wise fathers of the Church, the Christian ascetics. Take care of the holiness of your souls, the freedom of your consciences. Say loudly that you have been accustomed to pray and save yourselves in the churches, that the holy things of the Church are dearer to you than life itself, that without them salvation is impossible. No power can demand from you that which is against your faith, your religious conscience: 'We must obey God rather than men', said the holy apostles. That is what we, too, must say. The apostles joyfully suffered for the faith. Be you also ready for sacrifice, for podvig, and remember that physical arms are powerless against those who arm themselves with powerful faith in Christ. Faith moves mountains, 'the faith of the Christians has conquered the pagan boldness'. May your faith be bold and courageous! Christ destroyed hades. He will also destroy the snares of the enemies of our Church. Believe - and the enemy will flee from before your face. Stand in defense of your faith and with firm hope say: 'Let God arise, and let His enemies be scattered!'"[13]

St. Paisios the Athonite on Indifference, lack of courage, and how to overcome this:
"There's a war on today, a holy war that unsettles me is ***the reigning mood of tranquility***. A lot of ash, rubbish, and ***indifference has accumulated***, and a strong wind will be needed to blow it all away… He [God] rules everyone and will bring all to the defendant's bench to answer for what they've done, according to which each will receive his just desserts from God. ***Those who've in some way helped the cause of good will be rewarded, and those who do evil will be punished.*** God will put everyone in their place in the end, but each of us will answer for what they did in these difficult years, both in prayer and in deeds. ***Today they're trying to destroy faith,*** and for the edifice of faith to fall they quietly pull out one stone, then another. ***But we're all responsible for the destruction; not just those who destroy but we who see how faith is being undermined and make no effort to strengthen it***. As a result the seducers are emboldened to create even greater difficulties for us, and their rage against the Church and the monastic life increases… ***Today there are many who strive to corrupt everything: the family, the youth, the Church.*** In our day ***it's a true witness to speak up for one's people, for the state is waging war against divine law. It's laws are directed against the Law of God.*** But ***we are responsible for not letting the enemies of the Church corrupt everything.*** Though I've heard even priests say: "Don't get involved in that. It's none of your business!" If they had reached such a non-striving condition through prayer I would kiss their feet. But no! T***hey're indifferent because they want to please everyone and live in comfort. Indifference is unacceptable even for laymen, and all the more so for the clergy. An honest, spiritual man doesn't do anything with indifference.***
"Cursed be he that doeth the work of the Lord deceitfully", says the Prophet Jeremiah (Jer.

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[12] See St. Mark of Ephesus "Letter to George Scholarios part 2," as cited in "Saint Mark of Ephesus and the False Union," *scottrobertharrington.wordpress.com*, Saint Mark of Ephesus and the false union of Florence. by Archimandrite Amvrossy Pogodin, M.Sc.Eccl., D.D. – Saint Andrew of Valaam Association. (wordpress.com).
[13] See St. Hermogenes of Tobolsk the Hieromartyr as cited in "Hieromartyr Hermogenes, Bishop Of Tobolsk And Those With Him," *orthodox.net*, Hieromartyr Hermogenes, Bishop Of Tobolsk And Those With Him (orthodox.net).

48:10)... ***The spirit of lukewarmness reigns. There's no manliness at all!*** We've been spoiled for good! How does God still tolerate us? ***Today's generation is the generation of indifference. There are no warriors.*** The majority are fit only for parades. Godlessness and blasphemy are allowed to appear on television. And ***the Church is silent and doesn't excommunicate the blasphemers.*** And they need to be excommunicated. What are they waiting for? ***Let's not wait for someone else to pull the snake out from its hole so that we can live in peace. They're silent out of indifference.*** What's bad is that even people who've got something inside have begun to grow cool, saying: "Can I really do anything to change the situation?" ***We have to witness our faith with boldness, because if we continue to be silent we'll have to answer in the end.*** In these difficult days each must do what's in their power. And leave what's out of their power to the will of God. In this way our conscience will be clear. ***If we don't resist, then our ancestors will arise from their graves. They suffered so much for the Fatherland, and we? What are we doing for it***?... If Christians don't begin to witness their faith, to resist evil, then the destroyers will become even more insolent. But today's Christians are no warriors***. If the Church keeps silent, to avoid conflict with the government, if the metropolitans are silent, if the monks hold their peace, then who will speak up?***... ***Try to be manly. Pull yourself together a bit.*** Do you know what Christians are suffering in other countries?... But here many exhibit indifference. There's not enough disposition to kindness, love of devotion. ***You see, if we don't begin to make war against evil, to expose those who tempt believers, then the evil will grow larger.*** If we throw aside fear then the faithful will be emboldened a bit. And those who wage war against the Church will have a harder time… ***A lukewarm clergy lulls the people to sleep, leaves them in their former condition so they won't be upset.*** "Look", they say. "By all means don't say that there'll be a war, or the Second Coming, that one must prepare oneself for death. We must not make people alarmed!" And others speak with a false kindness, saying: "We mustn't expose heretics and their delusions, so as to show our love for them." ***Today's people are water-soluble. There's no leaven in them. If I avoid upsetting myself to protect my fleshly comfort then I'm indifferent to holiness! Spiritual meekness is one thing, and softness and indifference are quite another.*** Some say: "I'm a Christian and therefore I have to be joyful and calm." But they're not Christian. They're simply indifferent. And their joy is only a worldly joy. He in whom these worldly seeds are present is no spiritual person. ***A spiritual person consists of nothing but pain. In other words, he's in pain at what's going on, he's in pain for people's condition***. And divine comfort is bestowed upon him for his pain… God expects patience, prayer and struggle from us. If you anger when you yourself are offended, your anger is unclean. ***But if someone is offended in the service of holiness, that means the zeal of God is in him. Indignation can be righteous when it's indignation for God's sake.*** That's the only justifiable kind of indignation in a person. It's unseemly to become angry in one's own defense. ***Resisting evildoers is another matter, however, when it's in defense of serious spiritual matters, when our holy faith, Orthodoxy, is concerned. Then it's your duty. To think of others, to counter the blasphemers in order to defend one's neighbor — this is pure, because carried out in love***… ***All that a person does he must do for the sake of God. Christ must be at the source of every movement. Much attention is required, for when we do something with the aim of pleasing others we gain no benefit***… Divine enlightenment is required and when it's not there the person abides in darkness. ***He may act out of good intentions but create many problems in his confusion, both for the Church and for society***… The mean, the cowardly, and the small of spirit, on the other hand, use impudence to hide their fear. They're afraid of themselves as well as others and 'shoot' without stopping. Courage and audacity are one thing; criminality and malice

quite another. In order to succeed at anything one needs a wild streak, in the positive sense. He who lacks this wild streak can become neither a hero nor a saint. The heart must become uncalculating. In our age audacity has become a rarity. Water, not blood, flows in people's veins. So if a war were to break out, God forbid, many would simply die of fright while others would lose heart, because they're used to an easy life. ***Fear is necessary when it helps a person turn to God. Fear from lack of faith, from lack of trust in God, on the other hand, is ruinous. Such fear is driven out by audacity.*** We must remember: ***The more a person fears, the more he is tempted by the enemy.*** If a person refuses to strive to become courageous, and doesn't strive for real love, then when a difficult situation arises he'll become a laughingstock… The warrior takes joy in the fact that he's dying so that others won't have to. If you dispose yourself this way then nothing will be frightening. Courage is born from much love, kindness and self-sacrifice. Today people don't even want to hear about death. However, he doesn't remember that death is living outside of reality. ***Those who fear death and love life's vanities are in a state of spiritual stagnation. Bold people, who always keep death before them and think about it constantly, on the other hand, conquer vanity and begin to live in eternity and heavenly joy while still here on earth. May he who fights in the war for Faith and Fatherland cross himself and not fear, for God is his helper!*** God Himself will decide whether he is to die or to live. ***One needs to trust God, not oneself… Don't give in to panic. Cowards are of use to no one. God looks at a person's situation and helps him. We have to remain cold-blooded and use our brains. No matter what happens, we must continue to pray, think and act. It's best to always stand up to a difficult situation using spiritual means.*** However that ***spiritual boldness which is born of holiness and striving towards God*** is missing today, as is the natural boldness needed in order not to turn coward in the face of danger. ***In order to hold back a great evil, great holiness is needed.*** A spiritual person can hold back evil and help others. ***In the spiritual life the biggest coward can attain great courage by entrusting himself to Christ and His divine help.*** He can go to the front lines, do battle with the enemy, and win! ***So therefore we will fear God alone, not people, no matter how evil they may be. The fear of God makes any coward into a hero! A person becomes fearless to the extent he unites with God.***"[14]

St. Gregory Palamas: "The silence of the clergy is atheism."[15]

St. Theodore the Studite: "It is a commandment of the Lord, that one must not remain silent in the event that the Faith is at risk. For He says 'speak out, and do not remain silent'.." (Acts 18:9) And "If he retreats, my soul does not favour him". (Hebr. 10:38) And "If they remain silent, then the stones shall cry out" (Luke 19:40). Thus, when it comes to the Faith, it is not possible for one to say, "Who am I?""[16]

Ibid.: "At a time like this, when Christ is being persecuted through His Image, one is obliged to fight, not only if he is superior in rank and in knowledge by preaching and teaching the Orthodox word; but even if he is in the place of a student, he still has a duty to reveal the truth

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[14] How prophetic these words are for us today! See St. Paisios the Athonite, "On The End Times," *orthodoxword.wordpress.com*, Elder Paisios of the Holy Mount Athos: On The End Times | OrthodoxWord (wordpress.com).

[15] See The Heresies of Ecumenism and Covidism (orthodoxtalks.com).

[16] *Epistle (81) Pantoleon Logothetis,* PG 99, 1321A.B (translated). Taken from: Are laypeople permitted to interfere in the matters of the Church? (2) (impantokratoros.gr)

courageously and speak freely. These are not the words of me, the sinner, but of the divine Chrysostom, along with other Fathers."[17]

See also:

- Ecumenism Awareness: Introduction (orthodoxinfo.com)
- Are laypeople permitted to interfere in the matters of the Church? (2) (impantokratoros.gr)
- Should We Ever be Silent on the Matters of Faith? Lessons from the Life of St. Maximus the Confessor. – The Inkless Pen
- THE FAITHFUL PEOPLE OF GOD NOT ONLY HAVE THE RIGHT - THEY ARE OBLIGED TO CORRECT ERRING CLERICS (orthodoxethos.com)

[17] *Epistle (2) To Monastics*, PG 99, 1120B (translated). Taken from: Ibid.